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FROM : AmConsulate BASEL

EUD INDEX

46
DESP. NO.

COPY NO. 1 SERIES A

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

April 16, 1959
DATE

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1-3

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Number 1 of 5 copies, Series A

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SUBJECT: REPORTED CONVERSATION WITH KHRUSHCHEV ON BERLIN.

A prominent Swiss Banker, headquartered in Basel, has given the Consulate in confidence the following account of a private conversation held recently between Khrushchev and another man. The banker declined to identify the other man, even as to nationality. He said if he gave the nationality of the man the Consulate would immediately know who he was. He said the other man spoke fluent Russian. The Consulate strongly believes the other man to have been the Swiss ambassador in Moscow.

When he received his visitor, Khrushchev had on his desk before him two piles of documents, one on his left hand and the other on his right. He pointed to the pile on his left. Look here, he said, here is my 15-year plan to develop the Russian economy, to provide more consumers goods, to stop the waste on armaments and to raise the standard of living. Over here, he said, indicating the other pile, are statements of the American generals and their other leaders that they have the power to destroy us and that they will destroy us. What would you do in my position?

His visitor said, why, you certainly know that this is not true. The Americans are not aggressors; they would never attack any country. Khrushchev replied he believed they would. He said, I will tell you how we will find out. I intend to turn the screw very hard over Berlin. If the Americans do not go to war then we shall know that you (his visitor) are right.

The Basel banker commented that if Khrushchev really believed the Americans intended to attack him, it was a dangerous situation; it was equally dangerous if he did not believe it but intended to run so sharp a test over Berlin. The banker said his friend could not say to what extent Khrushchev may have been making propaganda; his friend told him, however, that the Russian leader seemed deadly serious.

It may be of interest that the banker, a leader in Swiss financial circles, expressed as his opinion that it was not impossible that Khrushchev really believed the U.S. would attack him, taking into account the American air bases and the statements that are made from time to time in the American press.

EAMcQuaid:jj

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Page 2 of
Encl. No.
Desp. No. 46
From Bern

He, the banker, didn't, of course, believe it. But it was possible that a man like Khrushchev, a peasant who knew little of the outside world, might believe it. The banker said he certainly did not believe that the Communists, including Khrushchev, had given up their goal of world domination; it was possible, however, that they might want, or even need, a respite in which to satisfy the people's thirst for a higher standard of life.


Elias A. McQuaid
American Consul

cc: AmEmbassy BERN

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